

NEWS ARTICLE

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Florida's Sea Grant Program "Science Serving Coastal Florida"

The Florida Sea Grant College Program (FSG) is one of 29 programs of the National Sea Grant College Program (NSG). The NSG was created by Congress to combine scientific research, education and information to support wise stewardship of marine resources. Sea Grant was set up under the Department of Commerce, where it is administered through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

At the national level, Sea Grant provides financial support of a network of 29 state Sea Grant College Programs in coastal and great lake states, including Puerto Rico and Hawaii. The programs are usually established within a main university of each state, which in turn, cooperates with many other universities and research organizations in that state. These institutions throughout the country represent approximately 250 colleges and universities nationwide in funding scholarships, educational activities and research projects that address coastal issues. Today, results of Sea Grant research projects are disseminated through publications such as technical reports and manuals, through television and video news programming, and through each state's respective web sites on the Internet. Published results of Sea Grant work are available through the National Sea Grant Library (NSGL), which contains more than 84,000 listings. These documents are made available to scientists, teachers, students and other individuals all over the world. The NSG program has a web site at nsgo.seagrants.org. Information about the NSGL can be found here along with information about each state's program.

Florida Sea Grant involves researchers, educators, government agencies, business partnerships, civic organizations and extension agents to accomplish its mission "to

enhance the practical use of conservation of coastal and marine resources in Florida to create a sustainable economy and environment.” Program managers and specialists located at the Gainesville campus of the University of Florida work with off-campus agents located in 22 coastal counties, and with scientists and researchers at Florida's ten public universities (including the University of West Florida), Mote Marine Laboratory, Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution, and Nova Southeastern University. Some of the activities that FSG is involved in include marine aquaculture, sustainable fisheries, seafood quality and safety, marine industries, coastal ecosystem habitats, coastal processes and storms, water quality and safety, and marine biotechnology.

In the 30 years that it has been in existence, Florida Sea Grant has generated information through hundreds of programs and projects that have contributed to the well being of coastal communities and marine related industries throughout the state. Nearly two-thirds of its federal funding goes to support competitive research grants. All projects must satisfy three criteria. The project must be based on a real problem, have strong scientific or educational value, and demonstrate that the work will benefit and involve users of the resource. The accomplishments of the FSG program are the result of many groups collaborating together to accomplish mutually beneficial goals. Its web site at flseagrant.org has information concerning ongoing and past accomplishments of the Florida Sea Grant program, a publication list, funding opportunities and educational links for teachers.

Locally, Sea Grant programs address water quality issues from the creeks and rivers to the estuaries and the Gulf of Mexico. Components of this program include seagrass communities, coastal living impacts, and working with 4-H youth on marine science projects and programs. In the coming year, some events that Sea Grant will be involved in include: the Santa Rosa Rivers Symposium at the PJC Milton campus, March 24, 2001, marine science camps at Camp Timpoochee on the north shore of Choctawhatchee Bay, coastal and underwater dive clean-ups, coastal living workshops, and beach ecology programs.

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